

DOWNTOWN COUNCIL OF CHAMPIONS

MILLENNIAL SWAT TEAM

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2016-2017

AUSTIN, TX

CHATTANOOGA, TN

DES MOINES, IA

LINCOLN, NE

SALT LAKE CITY &
PROVO, UT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is a unique time in history to be living in Springfield Missouri. We are not immune to the challenges other cities face, but we have ingenuity in our DNA and a culture of collaboration that truly sets us apart from other communities.

The capacity for unprecedented collaboration allows us to take calculated risks together and achieve uncommon results. It is within that framework that community leaders created the Downtown Council of Champions in 2015. The Council consists of leaders from the public and private sector who have a passion for downtown and are willing to invest time and resources into high-level planning for the future.

We are honored that this group of well-regarded leaders chose to seek input from young professionals in our community. And we are proud of work shared in the pages of this report. Representing a diverse background of professional and personal perspectives, the Millennial SWAT team came together quickly and forged bonds that will take us well beyond our initial assignment to do reconnaissance work in target cities. This opportunity is not lost on us and we appreciate the confidence the Council has in our desires and abilities to help shape the future of Springfield's downtown. We also hope for continued involvement in any community visioning processes.

Without further ado, we present our 2017 report. Within its pages you will find three overarching values that we observed in all cities visited. We believe the following are paramount in the effort to attract and retain future generations of young people and important to keep in mind throughout all downtown initiatives.

1. Empower the Next Generation
2. Embrace Inclusivity
3. Speak with a Unified Voice

Following the values are the nine recommendations for large-scale projects we believe would significantly benefit Springfield but would require major community-wide and Council of Champions support.

1. Create a focal point attraction or venue that appeals to visitors and locals
2. Build an outdoor amenity that has multiple benefits
3. Enhance connections/corridors into Downtown
4. Create a hub for technology and innovation
5. Engage university students
6. Incorporate all form of art into the culture of downtown
7. Promote housing options for young professionals and families
8. Develop a strategic plan for encouraging economic growth
9. Expand the perception of downtown and reinforce its emerging character

We encourage leaders to think big and be bold. We don't want to be just another mediocre Midwestern city with no identity. Execution is critical. It is not enough to think big and act boldly or just embrace the findings of our report. In order to succeed, we must concentrate on how we execute the plan, demanding excellence in design. It would be a missed opportunity and waste of money and resources if we, for example, build an uninspiring convention center or other landmark structure. Let's create structures, amenities, and spaces that are uniquely "Springfield;" that is to say, we should create things for Springfieldians, and not be concerned with what may or may not attract visitors or outside businesses. If we create amenities that make our city a great place to live, others will come.

We appreciate the opportunity to visit the great cities of Austin, Chattanooga, Lincoln, Des Moines and Provo/Salt Lake City. We look forward to the ongoing dialogue about the future of downtown, the future of Springfield.

Millennial SWAT Team 2017

OVERARCHING VALUES

There are three abstract ideals the Millennial SWAT Teams observed in all cities visited. We believe the following are paramount in the effort to attract and retain future generations of young people and important to keep in mind throughout the implementation of all downtown initiatives.

1. Empower the next generation.

When priorities start to shift from tailgates, happy hours, and mid-week lake escapes to business attire, board meetings, and budget planning, an interesting mix of opinions start to emerge. Strategically planning for the next generation is no easy task, especially when this group is typically not engaged with traditional planning efforts in the first place.

How do we merge the existing worlds of the tried and true community professionals with the next wave of downtown business owners and advocates? By creating a platform to engage the next generation and offer opportunities for them to be involved in implementing ideas and programs for downtown Springfield. An advisory committee consisting of passionate young professionals would create an outlet for emerging visionaries to play a role in downtown's continued success. Currently there are over 25 millennials in downtown that either own businesses or are serving in upper-level management roles for downtown companies. Activating this group along with other like-minded young professionals is important for setting the stage for following generations.

High energy programming and activities are also key for young professionals to feel connected to their community. Identifying opportunities for events that speak to the next generation and encourage them to be proud of the community they live in, is integral for attracting and retaining young professionals. Springfield has hit the nail on the head recently in creating the highly successful Birthplace of Route 66 Festival in downtown. Using this a model for future events that reach a younger demographic could prove to be wildly popular as well.

We must continue to be forward thinking in setting up the next generation for success. This has to begin by keeping them at the top of mind and inviting them to the conversations surrounding progress.



CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Lincoln Young Professionals Group holds "First Look" events for members to get a sneak peek at the newest businesses, organizations, and facilities before anyone else (soft openings). It's a win-win for businesses, because they get free promotion and honest feedback from young professionals.

The Y.P. Group is also asked by the City and other organizations to be involved in conversations about community projects and proposals — they are given a voice.

"Stereotypically, the next generation is often lacking in experience, wisdom and financial wealth or know-how. With that being said, the next generation is rarely lacking enthusiasm, big ideas or a burning passion to be engaged."



2. Embrace inclusivity.

Inclusivity –

An intention or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who are physically or learning-disabled, or racial, sexual or ethnic minorities.

A common theme observed throughout all cities visited was the welcoming of diversity and inclusivity. This theme was most apparent, and most surprisingly observed, in both Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah. While there is a strong religious presence, both cities embrace all of their citizens. For example, in 2015, Salt Lake City elected its first openly lesbian mayor. With the support of the Mormon Church, Salt Lake City banned discrimination of LGBTQ residents, while also ensuring the protection of speech regarding religious and moral beliefs of other employees, so long as the speech is reasonable and not harassing. Salt Lake City was able to find a balance between equality for all citizens and the freedom of religion.

Millennials are a tolerant generation. According to a Pew Research Poll, 71% of millennials support LGBTQ rights, and they are twice as likely to identify as LGBTQ than previous generations. It's likely that future generations will continue this trend of tolerance and acceptance, and important that they feel comfortable living in, and inviting others to visit, an area where they feel protected and equal.

Large companies, such as Apple, Google and Uber, favor and embrace diversity and inclusivity of their employees; it's a value within their corporate culture. If Springfield would like to attract business expansions and host conferences for large companies, we must provide a safe environment that lives up to the values these companies embrace; they must feel comfortable sending their employees to our city. There are many examples from throughout the country within the last few years of business expansions and large conferences that were canceled due to what these businesses recognized as discriminatory legislation.

In comparing the current practices and reputation of Springfield to the cities that our teams visited, it's apparent that Springfield isn't doing enough to embrace and welcome diversity and inclusivity. We need to engage, empower and protect all individuals to foster an interesting and diverse environment that will attract and retain large businesses, millennial workers and growing majority populations.

CASE STUDY: SALT LAKE CITY/PROVO

Despite being in one of the most conservative states, contacts in both cities mentioned that they've managed to move past divisive social issues at the city level to see the big picture. They can't please everyone, so they've chosen to focus on encouraging and attracting younger people, who overwhelmingly support LGBTQ rights (71%, according to a Pew Research poll). Salt Lake City offers a non-discrimination policy for its LGBT residents, which the LDS Church supports. Business Development Coordinator, Scott Bowles, cited Provo's willingness to protect human rights while respecting individual religious beliefs as one reason for the City's success attracting larger corporations.

3. Downtown should speak with a unified voice.

We've all joked about Downtown Springfield's "Alphabet Soup." Inarguably, the Downtown Community Improvement District (CID), the Downtown Springfield Association (DSA), the Urban Districts Alliance (UDA, now doing business as the Downtown Council of Champions) all play vital roles in the visibility, economy, cleanliness, and safety of Downtown. However, **confusion among citizens, business owners and other stakeholders as to who is who, and who is responsible for what, is a significant barrier to the cohesive, coherent message that must be conveyed about Downtown Springfield going forward.**

To help remedy this, the Millennial SWAT Team suggests uniting Downtown Springfield behind a single, unified voice. A dynamic organization should be chosen or developed to serve as the primary advocate for the execution of a strategic, long-term plan. Each of the aforementioned organizations (in addition to other key players) will certainly remain involved, but designating which is the recognizable "face" for the general public and media could go a long way toward clarifying Downtown's organizational structure.

Additionally, the Millennial SWAT team recommends the development of a clear, externally focused branding and marketing campaign that lays out a collective vision for Downtown. Ideally, this campaign would be developed by current stakeholders and coordinated and delivered by the aforementioned "primary advocate" organization.

The success of these steps depends on the ability of the "primary advocate" to secure the resources necessary to execute effective strategic planning and public awareness campaigns. Additional funds are necessary to manage programming, facilitate communication and execute a long-term vision for Downtown Springfield – while maintaining the "Clean, Safe, Friendly" mission of the Downtown CID, the business advocacy and economic development mission of the DSA, and the big-picture leadership of the Downtown Council of Champions, along with other existing City of Springfield and civic efforts. All funding mechanisms should be explored to support this process.

"The clear communication of Downtown Springfield's future is mandatory to ensure community buy-in. To accomplish this, Downtown Springfield must speak with a single, unified voice that is empowered by the full support of all stakeholders."

CASE STUDY: LINCOLN



The Downtown Lincoln Association serves as the single unified voice of downtown and branded itself strictly as "Downtown Lincoln." All marketing promotions (signage, social media, events) were strongly branded as a "place" rather than just an organization or tagline.

To also help send the message of unity, the City, Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development, Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau, Lincoln Young Professionals Group, and others re-branded together using a single logo with differing colors.



CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

Chattanooga's downtown association and the primary advocate for downtown Chattanooga is called the River City Company. The River City Company was formed at the beginning of the downtown revitalization and has served as the main hub and driver for strategic planning and execution. The RCC has a large operating budget, funded primarily through grants and private foundations, so it can facilitate downtown programming, marketing and developer relations. RCC operates a little differently than a traditional downtown association as it actually owns property and functions as a "developer and manager of last resort." This has given the RCC the power to choose the right uses and tenants for downtown property and move quickly when opportunities and trends arise.



BRANDING EXAMPLES



BIG INITIATIVES

The following are recommendations for large-scale projects we believe would significantly benefit Springfield but would require major community-wide and Council of Champions support.

1. Create a focal point attraction/venue that appeals to visitors and locals.

Development of a downtown convention complex has been a community priority for the last several years. The recent community visits by young professionals validated the need for a convention complex or similar amenity anchor in downtown Springfield.

Springfield has made a significant down payment on these types of facilities with the current Expo Center, University Plaza, Jordan Valley Car Park, Jordan Valley Park and its proximity to the downtown square but needs to make the connection (both literally and figuratively) between its assets. In addition, a climate needs to be fostered to allow development of public-private partnerships to be the stimulus for this required change.

Although not a true convention center, the Expo Center has 110,000 square feet of exhibit space and serves its purpose for trade shows and local events. However, the Hunden Report – a needs assessment originally created in 2011 and revised in 2016 – explained that to remain competitive in attracting out-of-town conventions and sporting events to downtown, the Expo Center should be expanded to include additional meeting space and physically connected to a new 200-room hotel and the existing University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center.

“Development of a convention complex or similar amenity in downtown will not only act as an economic engine but a catalyst for additional downtown growth through private development, including but not limited to the St. Louis Street corridor, Jordan Valley Park, etc. In particular, the development of a convention complex and the potential daylighting Jordan Creek through downtown could create opportunities to develop a “riverfront” boardwalk or water features in downtown.”

To accomplish this, a public-private partnership needs to be developed with key stakeholders including: City of Springfield, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Greene County, Downtown Springfield Association, Downtown Council of Champions, Convention & Visitors Bureau, Springfield Regional Arts Council, John Q. Hammons Hotels & Resorts and other developers and/or local partners.

Community leaders are actively engaged in discussions regarding this project and we encourage the Downtown Council to continue championing it to fruition in an effort to drive economic development in downtown, generate new jobs and increase ongoing tax revenues from out-of-town guests.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga Convention Center is a full convention complex attached to a hotel located in the heart of their downtown. It is also located close to several other large hotels, including the City-owned Chattanooga, that work well to serve large conventions including the Annual International Iron Man competition, among others.

Other major attractions to their downtown include the world-class Tennessee Aquarium. Although a smaller project, the High Point Climbing Gym is a prominent feature in their downtown as both a source of outdoor recreation and a public art piece. It serves as a landmark and symbol of Chattanooga’s uniqueness.



CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

The Pinnacle Bank Arena draws a wide appeal, because it is not only used for sporting games, but also for large scale music concerts, comedy shows, and other entertainment attractions (multi-purpose). Building the Arena boosted downtown economy and spurred new developments.



2. Build an outdoor amenity that has multiple benefits.

A common theme observed in many of the cities visited was the successful incorporation of elements of the “urban outdoors” into their downtowns. This was achieved on a small-scale level through landscaping, lush street trees, functional green spaces and unique outdoor recreational opportunities.

Several cities chose to center their downtown revitalization efforts around a larger-scale project – transforming a major part of the natural landscape into a game-changing amenity with environmental, social and economic benefits. In most cases, this outdoor feature was a waterway.

By investing in their riverfront area, Chattanooga not only fixed historic flooding issues, but also created an impressive outdoor amenity with art installations, water features, trails and areas to gather and recreate. In combination with the development of the Tennessee Aquarium, this project served as a catalyst for major business and residential development.

For another major waterway project, Lincoln teamed up with the Army Corps of Engineers in a flood control, economic development, transportation and community revitalization project known as Antelope Valley. The project created a belt of greenspace running through their downtown that serves both to unite, and divide, very urban Nebraska University property from residential neighborhoods. By utilizing native landscaping and incorporating public art and water features, the area has a unique aesthetic. The trails included in the project serve as a transportation and recreation hub – with a multipurpose building constructed to serve 5K events and offices for city-wide health initiatives. This project has also served as a catalyst for economic development, attracting Assurity Life Insurance corporate offices and other developments.

The Millennial SWAT Team was excited to learn that there is potential for a similar, multi-faceted project in our own downtown.

Although it would require an expensive, community-wide effort, the renewal and daylighting of Jordan Creek through downtown Springfield has the potential to change the entire face of our downtown, enhance its character, and serve as an identifying landmark of our city. The project would have wide-ranging appeal and would serve as a unifying feature and catalyst for future development and connectivity. The project would offer flood control relief, beautify downtown, provide recreation, and serve as a catalyst for redevelopment and connectivity of surrounding areas, including those heading north toward Government plaza.

We love the potential of this project to infuse more green space in what is now an industrial area. An adjacent trail system could connect many areas throughout center city making it both functional and beautiful. We like that this project would also have an environmental impact and improve the development potential of property in the downtown area.

CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Lincoln’s Antelope Valley project showcases multiple benefits including connecting Downtown through the trail system, stormwater and floodplain reduction, added urban green space, and health and recreational benefits utilizing programming like 5Ks and outdoor concerts. It also includes the Children’s Discovery Garden, an outdoor playspace and art structures made of natural materials to co-exist with the environment.



Additionally, downtown Lincoln created a concrete outdoor space, featuring a large street corner LED screen outside of the Arena, known as The Cube. It primarily displays digital art but also shows sporting events, movies, and more. The activated space around The Cube is great for congregating crowds to enjoy outdoor games, drinks, music, seating and interact with surrounding businesses. They also transform it into a skating rink during winter.



CASE STUDY: SALT LAKE CITY/PROVO

The City Creek plaza includes shopping, entertainment, green space, businesses, residential, etc. and is situated in the heart of downtown SLC and thus easily accessible by their transportation systems. *For more information visit shopcitycreekcenter.com or citycreekliving.com.*



CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

Chattanooga focused much of their downtown revitalization efforts around their Riverfront area. Here, they invested in floodplain improvements, water features, a board walk and public art installations throughout.

With the Tennessee Aquarium located right on the shore of the river, this area has become a major attractor of tourism, locals, and a venue for large events.

Another outdoor amenity is The Block, a reuse project that turned an old theatre into an indoor/outdoor rock climbing art piece with retail space.



CASE STUDY: DES MOINES

Jordan Creek shopping area is situated around a waterway surrounded by recreational trails.



3. Enhance connections/corridors into downtown.

With the first crack of the bat at Hammons Field in 2004, a new wave of excitement and energy was brought to central Springfield. While only a few blocks east from downtown proper, Hammons Field, University Plaza and the Springfield Expo Center have continued to stand alone, independent of the nightlife and energy that begins to glow as you approach Park Central East.

Another exciting, eclectic district just north of downtown, is Commercial Street. With an emergence of artisan shops and local restaurants, a seemingly perfect partner for downtown, Commercial Street is just far enough away that an afternoon stroll from the central downtown district to C-Street is not the most alluring task.

Next, to the south of downtown, Missouri's largest tourist attraction, Bass Pro Shops, attracts thousands of patrons every year. That's thousands of people that are currently within three miles of Park Central Square and some of Springfield's best locally owned restaurants and shops.

Downtown is surrounded by energy, fun, hospitality, retail, greenway trails, and people. Yet a lot of people rarely, if ever, venture a few blocks into the heart of the city. Why? If you've ever made the trek from Hammons Field to Big Whiskey's on Park Central East or vice versa, you'll find that it's an easy walk. It's also a boring, non-inviting walk. Very little green space, virtually no signage, nothing pleasing to the eye, and certainly no Instagram-worthy points of interest along the way. **The walk essentially has no infrastructure to encourage a walker or everyday cyclist to bridge the gap.** The same is true if you head north, south or west of downtown. **Nothing to guide pedestrians or encourage commuters to come into downtown.**

How do we fix this? Implement functional connectivity enhancements.

"Bike share programs are booming across the U.S. creating connections for urban areas that didn't previously exist. Serving as an efficient method of bridging the gaps between neighborhoods and center city districts, bike shares are particularly popular with the millennial generation and the ever-growing population of individuals with an eco-friendly mindset."

The City of Des Moines is designing streetscapes with connectivity in mind. Sidewalks are no longer just a sidewalk. Like a skillfully designed map, sidewalks and trails are serving as an artful, interesting path from point A to B, encouraging pedestrians to explore the city.

Our downtown district is a canvas of opportunity

to create enhanced connections. Greenway trails and parks skim the edge of center city. Residential neighborhoods are emerging with students, young professionals, and empty nesters. The stage is set and the need is quickly surfacing to bridge these gaps with thoughtful, accessible connections.

CASE STUDY: DES MOINES



In Des Moines, strategically placed bike share stations provided an accessible connection between parking lots surrounding the perimeter of downtown to the central hub of office buildings and the mass workforce.

Emerging residential properties sprouting up around the edge of downtown Des Moines were also beneficiaries of bike share stations. Attracting young professionals, new residents could commute from home to work without a vehicle, thus, alleviating strains on parking that the community had previously faced.

An awesome side effect of Des Moines' emphasis on great connectivity was talent attraction. Many of the businesses and organizations we met with indicated that quality of life amenities such as bike share programs, art and pedestrian friendly corridors served as a major benefit for employers and their recruitment efforts.

For more information about Des Moines' bike share program, visit desmoines.bcycle.com.

CASE STUDY: AUSTIN



Inventive transportation: Car2Go, City of Austin Bicycle Program, Ride Share programs – RideAustin, Zipcar

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

Wide sidewalks with attractive streetscaping and signage allowed for easy walkability. Chattanooga also had a free downtown shuttle loop with stops at major tourist and local destinations.



CASE STUDY: SALT LAKE CITY

There was an abundance of transportation options, including a completely free public bus route that circled their urban core. We traveled to Provo via train and once there had options for getting around on foot, bike shares, or ride sharing services. SLC was full of transportation and infrastructure investment, including a ton of bike share stations and multiple bus routes with great visibility/signage for patrons, making it easy to get around. Interesting that we learned their transit is all managed at the state level by Utah Transit Authority.



CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Lincoln's Bike Share program was funded through public and private sponsorships. They have implemented protected bicycle lanes with traffic signals and bike tune-up stations. The bike lanes especially help connect the University students to downtown and connects other trails from the city into downtown.



4. Hub for technology and innovation.

It is undeniable that technology and innovation are two key components in enticing businesses to operate within a desired area and in attracting millennials to work.

Downtown Springfield is capable of accommodating both millennials and emerging tech companies. With the existing downtown infrastructure of SpringNet's broadband service, there are more than enough opportunities to attract hi-tech businesses onto the scene in downtown Springfield and with the handful of universities, retaining graduates with hi-tech degrees should be effortless.

In the cities visited by the Millennial SWAT teams, an overarching theme was that where there is advanced technology, there will be innovation and companies who are willing to relocate to reap the benefits of high-speed Internet.

In Chattanooga, TN, the presence of the high-speed 1-gigabit Internet drew tech companies and other tech savvy businesses to relocate to the downtown area within a technology district dubbed "Gig City." An initiative backed by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, called Geek Move, encouraged technology professionals to relocate to downtown Chattanooga by awarding up to \$11,250 toward buying a home in the downtown area.

Lincoln, Nebraska also realized the need to incentivize businesses and professionals to relocate to the downtown area or open satellites offices within downtown. Lincoln recognizes the impact innovation can have on a city and actively seeks out and caters to the top students at local universities, hopeful that they will make downtown Lincoln their home following graduation.

Downtown collaborative workspaces are appealing to millennials and are great for start-ups and small businesses. Branding downtown Springfield as the technology and innovation hub of Southwest Missouri may be all it would take to bring Springfield to the top of the list for those businesses who are looking for a place to call home. It is important to create an entrepreneurial environment that breeds small business start-ups and feeds into the larger corporations.

Expanding on the existing successful developments such as the Idea Commons, Jordan Valley Innovation Center, and the eFactory, would help market to a larger audience. Events like Spin66, 1 Million Cups and the hackathons will continue to help grow engagement.

Cultivating a technological and innovative environment can start by partnering with local high schools and universities to explain the opportunities that are available through pursuing hi-tech degrees and being a forward-thinking entrepreneur.

"We must be willing to invest our time and resources in technologies that may not come into realization until 5-10 years down the road."

We recommend that downtown Springfield take a chance on trying out new technologies and being the early-adopters of innovation.

The technology available in downtown Springfield may not only attract businesses to the area but could also attract tech

conventions. Springfield currently does not have the capability to host large hi-tech conventions due to some larger meeting spaces not being retro-fitted to serve the high-speed Internet.

We believe technology truly is the future, therefore **we encourage an on-going effort from the Council of Champions to emphasize the importance and relevance of technology and innovation within downtown Springfield**, and encourage hi-tech businesses looking for new homes to consider downtown Springfield as their final destination.



CASE STUDY: SALT LAKE CITY/PROVO

Both SLC and Provo prided themselves in being cutting edge tech-wise. In 2015, NYT called Utah "The Next Silicon Valley." Both cities actively strive to be in the vanguard of tech, and it's paid off by attracting Millennials and new businesses to the area.

Lesson learned: Take a forward-thinking approach to trying out new technologies. It's worth taking a risk to be an early adopter city.

CASE STUDY: LINCOLN



Lincoln has been known as a “great place to fail;” the important part is that they tried something new. One successful company, headquartered in downtown and created by University of Nebraska students, is Hudl—an online video software company. Other large businesses and organizations have been attracted to locate offices downtown.

The Young Professionals Group saw Lincoln’s workforce had a specific need for qualified programmers and other tech-specialists. To help fill this gap, they’ve utilized the Girls Who Code program, specializing in targeting high school students to further tech education.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA



Chattanooga was an early adopter in the high speed Internet trend. Through a major community-wide push, they came in first in the race to provide 1 gig of high speed to all businesses and residences in Chattanooga. Chattanooga being known as “Gig City,” drew tech companies and other tech-savvy businesses to relocate or expand in the downtown area.

An initiative backed by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, called Geek Move, encouraged technology professionals to relocate to Chattanooga by awarding up to \$11,250 toward buying a home in the downtown area.

CASE STUDY: AUSTIN

Entrepreneurship Environment: 46 Accelerators; “Great place to start, but not scale a business.” Encouraged to Fail. Austin is also known has a tech hub.



PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

Initiatives we believe could be further developed/promoted/encouraged by the Council of Champions and other community organizations in order to leverage existing opportunities.

5. Engage University students so they recognize the potential to live, work, play, grow and stay downtown.

"If Downtown is to be successful, thrive, grow and attract future generations of Springfieldians, perhaps the best place to begin is with the university students we already have living adjacent to our downtown."

According to US News and World Report, an approximate 42,000 students are enrolled in a mixture of graduate and undergraduate programs in the Springfield area.

One of the best ways to engage students is to actively be an advocate for their success. Providing and promoting

internships for university students in a variety of Downtown programs would combat two of Springfield's largest problems; "Brain Drain" and "Suburban Flight." By engaging university students through internship programs with DSA, Council of Champions, the City, Chamber of Commerce and other organizations with a downtown focus, we can begin to foster an appreciation for what downtown has to offer.

Downtown should continue to be a destination not just for work, but for play as well. Creating incentive programs that target new and incoming university students is key. For many students, their first experience downtown may be at a bar, movie, or restaurant. While this is fine, downtown also offers many unique activities such as Art Walk, sporting events, running events and much more.

Simply creating incentives for individuals to go downtown and explore is important. These incentives could be as easy as a booklet that rewards students for visiting certain stores or restaurants on certain days. Additional incentives could include fun events or giveaways organized by the Chamber of Commerce or DSA.

In the age of online shopping, instant downloads, and Amazon; being convenient is key. By its very nature, brick and mortar stores are not necessarily as convenient as online shopping. However, they still provide many benefits locally and to the individual shopper. If we cannot provide adequate and safe transportation or walking routes from university dorms and "hot spots" to downtown, retail and service industries will be unable to attract college-aged clientele. Infrastructure that is appealing to these individuals will make them spend more time in the downtown area.

The Network is the young professional arm of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. The program is organized of individuals under the age of 40 who already have an interest in advancing their careers, wish to fill leadership roles in the community and genuinely want to build relationships with other business leaders. It would be remiss to not include this organization in any effort to get the word out about internships or other opportunities we have for the university age group. For many younger professionals this is one of the springboards they use to get involved in their city.

CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

The Downtown Lincoln Association, in partnership with the University of Nebraska, created a free event to specifically target new college students, called Downtown 101. At the event, new students are welcomed with music from local bands, free food and giveaways, and an "assignment" booklet which rewards students for visiting and posting a picture on social media at downtown merchants (up to a \$50 gift card to use at the participating downtown stores).



CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

The University of Tennessee – Chattanooga campus is located very close to their downtown, but separated by a hill many university students try to avoid. Chattanooga has made a concerted effort to make the paths into downtown more welcoming with streetscapes and lighting. The River City Company sees the local student population as a untapped demographic and has recently shifted focus on efforts to attract and retain more university students through encouraging the development of affordable student housing options in the downtown area. They have also begun new programming to engage this population and cater to them.

6. Incorporate all forms of art into the culture of downtown.

“What makes a downtown unique?

A common element we noticed in each of the cities we visited was a deliberate and City-supported effort to incorporate art into the downtown landscape. Spilling out of alleyways, woven into the scenery of parks and parking garages, brightening up otherwise unremarkable corners,

art was everywhere downtown.”

Each piece represented the community's support of a local artist or arts organization and signaled the City's commitment to attracting young innovators to the area. With active organizations championing public art in each city—including Des Moines' Public Art Foundation, Public Art Chattanooga, Columbia's Standing Committee on Public Art, Salt Lake City's Public Art Program, Public Art Omaha, Lincoln's Partners for Public Art Development, and Austin's Art in Public Places -- these cities have made the decision to invest in public art not as an extra but as an essential aspect of placemaking. As a result,

each downtown felt uniquely *itself* ... the type of place that sticks in a visitor's mind and makes them want to visit again. If bustling and well-maintained businesses, buildings, roads, and transportation systems reveal that a community is healthy, the presence of ample and diverse public art pieces reveal that it is thriving.

Downtown Springfield's art scene has a lot going for it already. The Sculpture Walk program has brought 13 new pieces downtown. We have murals that are as much a part of downtown's heritage as the Heers Building or the Gillioz. The proximity of Missouri State University's Brick City and the Creamery Arts Center means the area is flooded with talented artists. The Millennial SWAT Team recommends working with partner organizations such as the Springfield Regional Arts Council, Springfield Art Museum, and downtown art galleries to expand and maintain the current crop of public art by fostering small grant opportunities to infuse art into new construction and improvements. We also recommend supporting new ideas for transforming downtown spaces, with particular interest in establishing an alleyway art program similar to Chattanooga's community outreach program, *Passageways: Activating the Urban Alley through Architecture*.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

Passageways is a community outreach project of the 2016 American Institute of Architecture Tennessee State Convention held August 24-26 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It is a public architecture exhibit focusing on the alleyways between downtown Chattanooga's buildings. The intent of the exhibit is to exemplify the potential of these spaces and the benefits they have in creating a healthy urban environment. The five winning alleyway art submissions are interactive – incorporating light, sound, and movement. Each winner received between \$5,000-\$10,000 for the construction of their designs.



CASE STUDY: DES MOINES

Project Destiny: BRAVO

- 17 communities contribute a portion of hotel tax to BRAVO program.
- Capital and corporate support for the arts. Companies view it as talent attraction tool.
- Two cents of hotel tax allocated to BRAVO, specifically for public art initiatives and newly constructed buildings
- Organization commissions graffiti art - gives purpose to murals, graffiti, alleys
- Branding: “It’s OUR downtown.” #SeizeDesMoines
- Sculpture Park



CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Similar to Chattanooga's alleyway art program, the City of Lincoln created and maintains this alleyway art gallery. This alleyway was frequently used by pedestrians, so they saw the opportunity to create an activated fun, safe space by hanging neon rope lights and hanging artwork on the walls. Art enhances the corridor's function.



7. Promote housing options for young professionals and families.

People are inclined to utilize services and do their shopping nearest to where they live and work. Springfield should take advantage of this fact to grow our downtown. We should support the development of affordable housing within downtown, rejuvenate neighborhoods that surround downtown and work with partner organizations (like the DSA, Chamber and the City) to leverage their specialized networks and resources.

Springfield already offers a significant number of single-family living options; however, within the downtown area, these types of options are lacking. New single-family developments within the downtown area are beginning to emerge, but a majority of these newer developments are solely focused on student tenants.

"This narrow focus ignores the young professional and multi-generational markets – both of which are prime opportunities to expand the number of people living in downtown."

We should continue to focus on tax incentives which will draw developers and builders to add more multi-family developments within the downtown footprint.

In conjunction with tax incentives for builders, we should focus on advertising downtown as a place where anyone can live, work, and play. This type of promotion will help to draw tenants to new developments. Additionally, providing the right kind of resources (including transportation, retail, and dining) will help guarantee that downtown meets the needs of tenants and guarantees the success of the new multi-family developments.

Improving the residential options within downtown boundaries is not the only way to make the downtown area more relevant. Downtown is bordered by several older, established neighborhoods and commercial districts that can also be included in a "downtown housing initiative." These outlying neighborhoods in downtown and north Springfield can offer suburban benefits within walking distance of an urban lifestyle.

Residents are potential downtown visitors and employees, thereby providing an economic boost to the main downtown area. However, currently many of the communities bordering downtown are under-resourced and in great need of incentive programs to encourage housing maintenance, improve public schools and programs, facilitate public transportation options, and improve road and infrastructure conditions.

These types of incentives could uplift the neighborhoods on the fringes of the downtown core and become more appealing to not only younger generations looking for starter homes, unique architecture and DIY opportunities, but older generations looking to downsize or relocate closer to the art and cultural center of Springfield. These types of incentive programs can increase the overall footprint of downtown in collaboration with the neighborhoods, instead of resorting to the, often controversial, practice of blighting older homes and buildings.

Older neighborhoods can be wary of new developments that look or operate differently than those they are accustomed to. Making changes to neighborhood demographics and practices, especially where multi-family developments are involved, can be difficult and require slow and careful implementation. Leveraging the experience and expertise of Springfield's organizations can improve the public perception and focus attention on the positive aspects of new development. Organizations such as the following are suggested as collaborators in the downtown efforts due to their current involvement in the downtown landscape and their ability to effect quality change in these neighborhoods:

- Downtown Springfield Association (DSA)
- Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
- Surrounding neighborhood associations
- City of Springfield
- Greene County

CASE STUDY: AUSTIN

Planned Neighborhood:

- Mueller Neighborhood, West part of town (previously underutilized)
- Two Miles from University of Texas, three miles from downtown
- Over 13,000 new Residents & 13,000 Permanent Jobs
- 4.4 mill SF office/institutional including 750,000 SF Retail
- More than 5,900 homes (25% Affordable Home program)
- 700 Acres total, 140 reserved for parks/open space
- Extensive sustainability and green building requirements



CASE STUDY: DES MOINES

- 10 year, 100% tax abatement for residential projects. Does not require blighting.
- SBA loans for facade programs in East Village
- Currently 98% occupied
- Residential mix: split 50/50 between empty nesters and young professionals. Very low student population.
- Primarily market rate
- \$2.5 million dedicated to kick-start Court Ave. housing district



CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Developers built apartments/condos above retail space next to the Pinnacle Bank Arena in hopes of drawing young professionals to live, work, and play downtown, but they quickly became priced out of the area. With unaffordable housing options, no grocery/convenience store options, and inadequate green space for outdoor activities with pets and kids, Lincoln struggles to attract young professionals to live downtown.

However, across from Antelope Valley, new developments are in the works to rejuvenate the historic Telegraph District and surrounding neighborhoods. They hope this will help boost affordable housing options near downtown.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

The Tomorrow Building development in Chattanooga is a new co-living apartment complex being developed in the heart of downtown Chattanooga that will target young professionals. The building will offer very small fully-furnished individual apartments, but will have several shared kitchen, living, and laundry facilities, among other shared amenities. The building will offer short-term, flexible leases and will cater to the expanding tech companies in Chattanooga who bring employees in from all over the world to work on specific projects.



8. Develop a strategic plan for encouraging economic development and business growth within all downtown districts.

A strategic plan for downtown growth and development played a key role in many of the cities the Millennial SWAT teams visited. We recommend the Council of Champions support a community-wide strategic planning process with the goal of developing a strategy for encouraging economic development and supporting business growth in the area. The following strategies were observed in other communities and we urge the Council to consider them:

Obtain feedback from current and past downtown private developers. Consider hiring a dedicated downtown business development expert.

We recommend the Council of Champions consider requesting feedback from current and previous developers that have developed or renovated in downtown Springfield. This feedback can and should be both informal (e.g., lunch conversations) and formal (e.g., written questionnaire). The objectives for this feedback should include – but not be limited to – the following:

- Gain an understanding of how the private developer approaches projects in Downtown and identify what is needed before a project can begin.
- Understand the developer community's wish list in regards to financing, incentives, commercial contacts, and residential space required.
- Ask for unfiltered feedback on the inherent partnerships required for any downtown development or renovation (e.g., the City and related key players: Community Improvement District, Downtown Springfield Association, etc.). Are the key players effective and efficient? Do they work well together?

Based on this analysis, we recommend the Council consider hiring a “downtown” specific business development director that can meaningfully add value to the private developer community and be a liaison with key players. This recommendation was raised by private developers in other cities; however, we understand each community is different. Because of this, we recommend the Council of Champions first obtain feedback from the private developer community.

To assist with meaningful, consistent and effective marketing, consideration should be given to enhancing the current CID efforts.

The City of Springfield currently has a downtown CID. This governmental district was recently renewed for a 15-year period. Its objectives include parking enforcement, image enhancement, sidewalk maintenance, and a supplemental police presence. We understand it is funded through a ½-cent sales tax and a property tax assessment. The CID Board appears well represented by a good mix of residents, commercial and institutional interests, as well as governmental and non-profit interests. It appears the CID is continuing to grow geographically, and is meeting its objectives.

Many of the cities visited by the Millennial SWAT teams had a single downtown association or district. The most effective cities appeared to have a healthy balance of objectives between safety, maintenance and marketing. We believe the current CID and Downtown Springfield Association are valuable assets to Downtown Springfield, but we believe our marketing needs a bit more “oomph” because there is considerable confusion about their roles and responsibilities.

We feel a consolidation and unifying of these organizations, or at least the messaging from these organizations, would create more consistent and effective marketing results. Many of the cities visited funded this via a special assessment on property taxes.

Explore enhancing current and developing future incentives to attract private development.

The City of Springfield is currently bound by the MO Legislature for the potential incentives offered to Developers. The City has consistently done a fine job with incentivizing developers with property tax abatements. These can range from 10 year full abatements (on increased values) to an additional 15 years for a total of 25 years. This second 15 years is a partial abatement, but can increase with LEED Silver Certifications. The State of Missouri and Federal government also offers Historic and Low Income housing tax credits.

These incentives have served downtown well the past 25 years. However, we encourage the Council to recommend to the City to consider liberalizing their approach on TIF projects. We certainly recommend being good stewards of resources, but TIF can be a key component for the right developer on the right project. We encourage Springfield to be bold with TIF financing when the timing is right.

CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Much of the development of Lincoln's downtown was the result of the Lincoln Downtown Master Plan. The initial Master Plan included design and development guidelines, as well as, proposed development projects. The plan was implemented and put into action in 2005 with an update in 2012 to include bike lane development and the P St. District development. The plan was created as a collaborative effort between Lincoln's Planning Department, the City's Urban Development Department (UDD), and the Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA), which was the main driving force behind implementation.

Downtown Lincoln Association was the driving force and biggest advocate for the development in Downtown Lincoln. They manage the 3 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and provide maintenance, landscaping, snow removal, and trash services. In addition to maintenance, the D.L.A. BID was the unified voice for Downtown. With every visit, it was reinforced that the D.L.A. was the biggest advocate for development, was a marketing source for businesses within the BID, and independently focused on activating all public spaces. One of the things that we found interesting was that there wasn't a discretionary membership into the BID, but that all businesses located in Downtown Lincoln were automatically members.

Another key incentive that we experienced in Lincoln was Tax Increment Financing (TIF). We had the opportunity to meet with a developer that was instrumental in the development of the Railyard District. In his opinion, TIF was, by far, a developer's best tool for developing in Lincoln. This idea was reinforced with every visit and was a common theme. Each state handles TIFs a little differently, but, from our experience in Lincoln, it was very developer friendly.

One final key element that was suggested was hiring a dedicated Business Development person for Downtown. The developer that we visited with used the example of Hastings, NE. In Hastings, the city saw major development in their Downtown once a dedicated person was hired for recruiting businesses to open a second location in that area. This person could act as a representative and an advocate for Downtown and offer a personal, local, approach to recruiting local developers and businesses to develop.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

The slogan for Chattanooga's River City Company is "Working to keep Downtown working." The RCC serves as the economic development engine for downtown Chattanooga with programs and initiatives focused on building, supporting and engaging Chattanooga residents and businesses to make downtown their home or destination. Their role and reach in the community is diverse and includes strategic planning initiatives in all six distinct downtown districts, recruiting new investment to Downtown, advocating for diverse housing options, planning for future development, and promoting downtown as a great place to have fun.



9. Expand the perception of what downtown is and reinforce its emerging character.

A common theme that was shared between several of the cities visited was the utilization of existing character, history and/or strengths to create downtown destinations. There was an emphasis on downtown development, while staying true to who they were as a city.

Downtown Springfield is more than just Park Central Square. It's more than just recognizable streets like Campbell Avenue or Park Central East. Historic Route 66, Brick City, Idea Commons, and West Central Neighborhood, for examples, are areas or places that people may not know are a part of Downtown's identity.

"Enhancing existing efforts to expand the perception of "Downtown Springfield" boundaries could offer more attraction to a wider range of visitors seeking a fun, unique destination. This can be accomplished with branding through signage, maps, and other way-finding marketing. Overcoming perceived barriers, such as, walkability or parking, will help ease visitor's decision to come Downtown."

Many of the cities used the grassroots, naturally occurring emergence of similar characteristics to create branded areas within the downtown core. We are beginning to see this happen in Springfield with the development of the brewery area in the western section of downtown. Some cities visited went as far as clearly defining the areas, naming them by "districts," and then marketing the "districts." In some cases the named districts reflected a niche and a completely different demographic of local or tourist visitor. These districts were easily recognizable, which led them to be viewed as specific destinations rather than the area being viewed as a general "downtown."

While not all had named "districts," they still utilized their culture in making developmental decisions. One such example would be Chattanooga, TN and their use of architecture to spotlight their outdoor culture with the development of The Block. Another example is that of Austin, TX and the idea of "Keep Austin Weird." This slogan was initially intended to promote local business, but has evolved into a guide for making decisions.

One thing that was completely evident, in all cases, was that development decisions, especially in the downtown areas of the cities visited, were all rooted in their culture. They wanted to create a downtown that reflected their identity and their story. Each decision was made intentionally, even if it was organic in nature.

Leveraging and expanding Downtown's existing nostalgic charm, art and music culture, and entrepreneurial atmosphere will reinforce Springfield's "sense of place" as a great location to live, work and play.

CASE STUDY: AUSTIN

The slogan "Keep Austin Weird" was initially intended to promote local business, but has evolved into a guide for making decisions.

CASE STUDY: CHATTANOOGA

Downtown Chattanooga consists of six connected but distinctive districts: NorthShore, Riverfront, Bluff View, City Center, MLK/UTC and Southside. Each district has a different focus and identity – one is known as an arts hub, one for government and businesses, one for entertainment, one for tourism and events. District names are well known and promoted in maps and signage.





CASE STUDY: LINCOLN

Lincoln has successfully activated both historic and newly developed “districts” or areas with unique attributes. The old train station and railway sat vacant until they were able to brand these areas as unique destinations, now known as the Rail Yard and Historic Haymarket District, which houses offices, a playground, and events such as a weekly farmers market. Keeping the nostalgic brick road, Lincoln Station signage, and the rail road tracks, helps other downtown businesses leverage the excitement; for example, one restaurant’s seating area is inside a train cab.

Other examples include: Lincoln’s Historic Telegraph District is infusing new retail and office spaces with a modern industrial aesthetic;

main streets are branded through signage and marketed toward different target audiences (P Street: more adults looking to shop; O Street: more for college-aged groups and nightlife); and Antelope Valley area targets outdoor enthusiasts.

